CALFED North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Improvements Background and Status

September 10, 2003

Background

The North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Improvements Project presents unique opportunities for synergy in achieving flood control and ecosystem restoration goals. The purpose of North Delta Improvements is to implement flood control improvements in a manner that benefits aquatic and terrestrial habitats, species, and ecological processes. Flood control improvements are needed to reduce damage to land uses, infrastructure, and the Bay-Delta ecosystem resulting from overflows caused by insufficient channel capacities and catastrophic levee failures within the study area. Components considered for the flood control such as setback levees and floodplain expansion areas may also be configured to create quality habitat for species of concern in the North Delta area. Through well-integrated flood control and ecosystem restoration, win-win solutions can be achieved that maximize benefits for both. Figure 1-2 shows the project study area for impact analysis.

Opportunity for these synergistic benefits is provided in large part by McCormack-Williamson Tract and Staten Island. Both properties are currently owned by The Nature Conservancy and were purchased through the CALFED Program for ecosystem restoration, flood control, and/or wildlife friendly farming. Potential components being considered in alternatives development include setback levees, floodplain expansion areas, detention basins, ecosystem restoration, dredging, bridge modifications, and levee raising.

Current Schedule

- Public Draft EIR/EIS — Spring 2004
- Complete EIR/EIS — Fall 2004
- Complete Design — Spring 2005
- Complete Construction — Spring 2008

Accomplishments to Date

- Engaged broad stakeholder and Agency involvement in planning process through the North Delta Improvements Group (NDIG), North Delta Agency Team (NDAT), Mokelumne-Cosumnes Watershed Alliance (MCWA), and individual stakeholder meetings.
- Conducted public scoping meetings in February, 2003.
- Completed regional HEC-RAS hydraulic model construction.

- Successfully completed peer review of HEC-RAS hydraulic model.
- Collaborated with UC Davis and CALFED Science Program staff for strategy to address key science issues.
- Developed alternatives screening criteria.
- Completed preliminary model runs for alternatives development.
- Completed project area biological surveys, wetlands delineation, and other existing conditions research for EIR/EIS.

Outstanding Issues

- Budget cuts and contract delays may impact project schedule.
- Must address restoration science issues (mercury, exotics, sedimentation processes, organic carbon, salinity, THMs).
- Need to address potential ecosystem impacts (such as crane habitat on Staten Island).
- Need to quantify and address potential growth inducing impacts.
- Must reconcile schedules for EIR/EIS and USACE feasibility study.

More detailed project information, including the public scoping reports and the hydraulic modeling peer review report, is available at the DWR North Delta Improvements website at http://ndelta.water.ca.gov.